

Vajrasattva Hall (Kongōdō)

Vajrasattva Hall stands at a site of special importance to Engyōji's founding abbot, Shōkū (910–1007). It is believed that during the early years of his training on Mt. Shosha, Shōkū resided in the subtemple of Fugen'in, which once stood in this area. It was while living at Fugen'in that Shōkū was visited by the bodhisattva Kongō Satta (Sanskrit: Vajrasattva). Kongō Satta symbolizes an unshakable aspiration for enlightenment and is a central figure in the Tendai sect of Buddhism. The deity reportedly taught Shōkū sacred hand gestures (mudra) that represent the Diamond and Womb mandalas, themselves representations of metaphysical realms that are fundamental to Esoteric Buddhist practice.

During the Muromachi period (1336–1573), the thatched-roof Buddha Hall of Fugen'in was moved here to enshrine a statue of Kongō Satta that commemorates Shōkū's miraculous encounter. The structure is centered on a gilded tabernacle that originally enshrined the statue, which is now on display on the second floor of the Jikidō (Refectory). The statue was carved in 1359 by Kōshun, the official sculptor of the Tōdaiji Temple in Nara.

Vajrasattva Hall was refurbished in 1544, at which time the roof was tiled and the ceiling was painted with colorful depictions of sacred objects and beings from a variety of Asian religious traditions. Among them are two dragons, which in Buddhism often represent enlightenment. In another part of the ceiling, an immortal Karyōbinga (Sanskrit: Kalavinka), half bird and half human, takes flight to preach the dharma with its sublime voice.